In-Depth Oversight
"Pulling the String"

While performing in-depth oversight, it is important to gather sufficient information to determine whether the identified conditions rise to the level of a finding. The gathering of this information and the determination that a deficiency exists relative to an established requirement is sometimes called "pulling the string." Pulling the string, in simple terms, is act of pursuing the problem sufficiently until enough facts and information are obtained so that appropriate decisions and actions can be taken.

Pulling the string will begin with the identification of a problem or deficiency, followed by documenting of what has been found. A well written problem statement is one of the more essential parts of the overall determination of whether a condition represents a deficiency. If the statement is thorough and factual, the job of in-depth oversight will be simplified, and misdirection will be minimized, since much of the initial research to evaluate the problem will have been completed.

There are a number of elements to consider in performing in-depth oversight and pulling the string. An accurate portrayal of the problem or event is needed, but there are additional steps that will help in pursuing the problem sufficiently until an informed decision can be made and appropriate action can be taken. Those steps are:

<u>1) Gather the Facts:</u> Restricting an account of a problem to factual information will avoid misleading information that can cloud the problem to be evaluated. This includes who, what, where, when, and to what extent the problem exists. One should not speculate on the "why" at this point. A root cause analysis may be performed later, if needed.

<u>2) Identify Deficiencies:</u> If a problem represents a failure to meet requirements, those requirements need to be stated as the basis of the problem.

<u>3) Identify Impacts:</u> Determine the impact of the problem on personnel, equipment, operations, or schedules. This will help to determine the overall significance and time needed to implement corrective actions. The impacts should be included in the problem description.

<u>4) Determine if a Trend Exists:</u> Adverse trends may exist, especially if problems were previously identified and not corrected. Past findings and supporting documentation for these problems should be referenced and this will save time in determining the extent of the problem. If a problem will affect or potentially involve multiple personnel, equipment, or operations, this should be identified. Knowing the depth and breath of a problem could have an effect on the time allowed to evaluate and resolve the problem.

<u>5) Obtain the Observations of Others:</u> In problem identification, one should always state the facts and avoid expressing opinions. However, there may be observations made by others that give insight on the problem and enhance understanding. In these situations, document the opinions and observations, stating them as such, and indicate that this information may, or may not be factual.